

PROCEEDINGS OF THE HISTORIC CONSERVATION BOARD

MONDAY, JULY 23, 2001

3:00 P.M., J. MARTIN GRIESEL ROOM, CENTENNIAL PLAZA II

The Historic Conservation Board met at 3:00 P.M., in the J. Martin Griesel Room, Centennial Plaza II, with members Bloomfield, Borys, Raser, Senhauser, Spraul-Schmidt and Wallace present. Members absent: Dale, Kreider and Sullebarger.

MINUTES

The minutes of the July 9, 2001, meeting were approved (motion by Borys second by Raser).

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS, 4125 HAMILTON AVENUE, NORTHSIDE NBD HISTORIC DISTRICT

Urban Conservator William Forwood distributed to Board members photographs of the proposed ATM machine and the site. He also presented letters that were received after completion of the staff report from the Northside Community Council; Will R. Book, President of Charles A. Miller Sons, Inc., 4138 Hamilton Avenue; and Jim Swafford, United Reliance, 4121 and 4137 Hamilton Avenue in support of the project. Staff recommended that additional street trees be added at the sidewalk to screen the new ATM and provide a northern edge to the adjacent park.

Project architect Denis Back and Don Beimesche, representing the Northside Bank, spoke in favor of the project. Mr. Beimesche said the bank is willing to cooperate with the HCB in designing landscaping to soften the effect of the ATM. John Ruschulte, owner of 1618 Palm Avenue, requested landscaping on the street to soften the effect of the ATM and parking lot upon the park and neighborhood.

Mr. Raser suggested street trees between curb cuts and recommended that the Bank contact Dave Gamstetter of Urban Forestry to develop the plan. He pointed out that street trees, as opposed to evergreen hedges, do not present a security problem for bank patrons or encourage litter. Ms. Borys suggested that more trees in the whole area, rather than just near the bank machine, would be an asset.

BOARD ACTION

The Board voted unanimously (motion by Bloomfield second by Wallace) to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the installation of an ATM/ND kiosk at the rear of 4125 Hamilton Avenue on the condition that additional landscaping be added at the sidewalk to help screen the kiosk and parking lot and that the final scheme be approved by the Urban Conservator prior to construction.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS AND APPROVAL OF A
CONDITIONAL ACCESSORY USE AND ZONING VARIANCES, 4219
HAMILTON AVENUE, NORTHSIDE NBD HISTORIC DISTRICT

Staff member Caroline Kellam presented this application for construction of a freestanding, internally illuminated sign at the Hamilton County Library in Northside. The HCB Board first reviewed the proposal May 7, 2001 and tabled the motion to allow the Library Board time to consider the HCB's recommendations to reduce the height and area of the sign and to eliminate its internal illumination so no zoning variances will be required.

In the revised design the sign has been lowered to be 8'-8" above grade and 16 square feet in area; it is still internally illuminated. Ms. Kellam indicated that the height would require a conditional use; variances for square footage and internal illumination will be required. Ms. Kellam gave the Board copies of a letter from the Northside Community Council supporting the staff recommendation to reduce the size of the sign but recommending interior illumination.

George Harley, architect representing the Hamilton County Library, was present. He explained that the sign is a uniform "bookmark" to be used throughout the library system and that its proportions must be maintained. Mr. Harley said that reducing the height of the sign to 6'-0" as requested by the Board makes it so small it would be difficult to see from a passing automobile. He said the Library's position is that they will not go smaller than the 8'-0" x 2'-0" on a ground sign. He requested the HCB either approve or disapprove the sign as submitted and not approve it on condition of reduction in size. This will give the Library the option of a wall sign or freestanding sign elsewhere on the library grounds, in an area where zoning allows larger signs. The Board reminded Mr. Harley that there are two different issues before it, one for a Certificate of Appropriateness and second for zoning approvals and variances. Moving the sign into a different zone may eliminate the need for a variance, but it does not make the sign any more appropriate under historic district guidelines.

Ms. Borys commented that the storefront signs at the Clifton and Greenhills libraries maintain the continuity of logo, typeface and color of the uniform sign but are not as large as that proposed for Northside. Mr. Harley said the Library Board is unwilling to alter the proportion or height of the sign. Mr. Senhauser pointed out that the proposed sign sits on a rise approximately 2' above the sidewalk, so it is much taller relative to the street and sidewalk. Mr. Bloomfield suggested installing the sign with the base at sidewalk level.

Mr. Raser and Mr. Senhauser expressed concern that approving an internally illuminated sign, even if 90-95% opaque, might set a precedent for other internally illuminated signs with a much higher transparency ratio.

Mr. Bloomfield said that the HCB is trying to work out a compromise with the Library on its contemporary, uniform signage that is good urban design, meaningful to the site and the building. Ms. Spraul-Schmidt and Mr. Raser commented that county

libraries are located in many different neighborhoods and locations and expressed regret that the Library did not take this into consideration in designing its signage.

BOARD ACTION

The Board voted unanimously (motion by Raser second by Wallace) to

1. Grant a conditional use for the installation of the sign at the Northside Branch Library building with the condition that the top of the sign not exceed 8'-0" above the grade of the sidewalk (at the point opposite the sign), and
2. Grant a variance to allow the sign to be internally illuminated, and
3. Grant a variance for the installation of the sign with the condition that the maximum area of the sign not exceed 16 square feet, finding that such relief:
 - A. Is necessary and appropriate in the interest of historic conservation so as not to adversely affect the historic, architectural or aesthetic integrity; and
 - B. Will not be materially detrimental to the public health, safety and welfare or injurious to the property in the district or vicinity.
4. Approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the installation of the sign with the above conditions, with the final scheme to be approved by the Urban Conservator prior to construction.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS AND ZONING VARIANCES, 501 BOAL STREET, PROSPECT HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT

Staff member Adrienne Cowden presented the staff report on this application for construction of an elevated rear deck. The building is on a sub-minimum lot; since the proposed deck is in excess of 12 percent of the ground area covered by the building, it requires zoning variances for rear and side yard setbacks. The applicant has incorporated staff suggestions (including reducing the depth of the deck) into the plan as presented.

Project architect, Mike Keifling of Environmetrics was present to answer questions from the Board. Mr. Bloomfield commented that the three 6"x6" posts proposed do not seem substantial enough to support the deck. Mr. Keifling responded that according to his calculations, the deck is sufficiently supported without requiring cross bracing. He said he was aware that he would have to return to the Board if additional bracing was required.

BOARD ACTION

The Board voted (motion by Borys second by Spraul-Schmidt) five in favor, Bloomfield opposed to accept the staff recommendation to:

1. Find that the proposed deck at 501 Boal Street meets the Prospect Hill Historic District Guidelines and approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for its construction with the condition that revised, scalable plans be submitted to the Urban Conservator for approval; and

2. Grant approval of a zoning variance for the required yard reductions to construct the deck, based on the discussion in the staff report, finding that such relief:
 - A. Is necessary and appropriate in the interest of historic conservation so as not to adversely affect the historic, architectural or aesthetic integrity; and
 - B. Will not be materially detrimental to the public health, safety and welfare or injurious to the property in the district or vicinity.

OTHER BUSINESS

OVER-THE-RHINE (NORTH) PROPOSED HISTORIC DISTRICT: The HCB briefly discussed the draft guidelines, revised to incorporate input from developers in both Over-the-Rhine and approved by the OTR Master Plan Steering Committee. The Steering Committee voted to support the designation with Section 5 [from the Neighborhood Housing Retention ordinance relating to parking lots] reinserted in the ordinance. The Board suggested some editorial changes and minor reorganization changes to the guidelines prior to submission of the designation report at the hearing on August 6, 2001.

Ms. Borys suggested that the durability and finish of non-historic or synthetic materials for renovation should be considered when deciding whether or not they are appropriate. The HCB OTR (North) study subcommittee will present a recommendation at the August 6 meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

As there were no other items for consideration by the Board, the meeting adjourned.

William L. Forwood
Urban Conservator

John C. Senhauser
Chairman

Date